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Ukraine at Salt Lake City Games: no medals, but some surprises

by Andrew Nynka

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah — With much of the 19th Winter Olympiad's competition completed and Ukraine's delegation earning no medals, the disappointment in the Ukrainian camp seems to have brought about, not only the firing of a biathlon coach and biathlon team leader, but questions regarding the reasons for Ukraine's poor showing.

However, the results have not been completely negative, said Vasyl Karlenko, team Ukraine's chief of mission.

According to Mr. Karlenko, with exception of Ukraine's biathletes, the group's athletes finished within what team trainers believe was their potential — even above expectations in the case of the men's Olympic ice hockey team and the men's freestyle aerials event.

It wasn't until the final three competitors in the men's freestyle aerials event that 24-year-old Stanislav Kravchuk of Ukraine was knocked out of medal competition. With the fall of the American gold medal favorite, Eric Bourgoust, in his final jump, Kravchuk completed his personal goal of finishing above sixth place. His fifth place result was better than most analysts predicted for the 1998 Nagano competitor who had finished ninth.

Kravchuk said of his second Olympic performance: "I feel I could have done better on my first jump — not by much, but better. My second jump, I've only attempted three times in my life. Today was the third time. This was my very first time in competition, especially attempting it in a competition like the Olympic Games, I'm very proud."

Born in Chirchik, Uzbekistan, Kravchuk qualified in 11th place and moved up to seventh after the first jump of finals competition. His second jump put him in first place after seven competitors but, with six competitors left, his score was not good enough to hold him a medal spot.

Despite a crushing 9-2 defeat by Latvia in the playoff for ninth place, Ukraine's hockey team was not expected to fair as well as it did against the likes of France and the preliminary round's Group B favorite, Switzerland. Had it not been for a 1-0 loss to Belarus in its first ever

Olympic game, Team Ukraine would have moved on to the next round of competition instead of Belarus.

In what many analysts have dubbed one of Olympic hockey's greatest upsets, going as far back as the United States' 1980 "miracle" win over the Soviet Union, Belarus eliminated Sweden on February 20 by a score of 4-3, putting Ukraine's neighbor in a semifinal showdown against Canada.

Regarding Team Ukraine's disappointing showing against Latvia, National Hockey League veteran Dimitri Khristich said, "I think we were too happy with our past performances and we took this game for granted." The Washington Capital continued, "It became obvious when the game started that not everyone came ready to play."

Ukraine's head coach, Anatolii Bohdanov said of the performance, "The first few minutes of the game [against Latvia] were difficult — it was like a boxer who takes several hits, it's difficult to stay on your feet. It was an unexpected surprise, this cold shower — the players didn't have time to rest after the game last night. The players needed to wake up and find their game. I wanted to keep the image of the team intact. This was a difficult game on

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Skier Stanislav Kravchuk, who earned fifth place in freestyle aerials.

Western diplomats come calling as parliamentary elections approach

by Roman Woronowycz

Kyiv Press Bureau

KYIV — Former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and current European Union General Secretary Javier Solana headlined a virtual parade of Western diplomats who came calling to Kyiv in the last few days to get a closer view of how Ukraine's elections are shaping up.

The list of visitors included U.S. and European leaders, members of parliament and congressmen, who expressed various opinions as to how the Ukrainian elections to the Verkhovna Rada are proceeding. The elections, scheduled for March 31, are already fraught with controversy and mudslinging and much concern over alleged infractions of election law.

Dr. Albright, today head of the National Democratic Institute, an arm of the U.S. Democratic Party, attended a daylong forum of Ukrainian non-governmental organizations focusing on the pre-election situation on February 16. She told delegates that the United States is watching the election process with great interest, to see whether Ukraine is committed to democratic processes.

At a press conference the following day, after she had met with President Leonid Kuchma, Prime Minister Anatolii Kinakh and the whole array of leading candidates and heads of the major political parties and blocs, Dr. Albright said there still is doubt about whether Ukraine is moving in the right direction.

"At this moment it is unclear whether the March 31 elections will mark a step forward for Ukraine's democratic future," said Dr. Albright.

She explained that while there had been improvements in the election law, there had also been far too many "credible reports of intimidation of journalists, denial of access to the media, unbalanced news coverage and abuse of power and illegal use of public funds and facilities."

Dr. Albright noted that in most cases only the government could fix the problems that had been observed. She explained that successful elections would significantly improve Ukraine's current image in the world and move the country considerably forward in strengthening its democratic institutions.

Meanwhile, Mr. Solana, who was in Kyiv on February 21 for a one-day visit — his fifth time in Ukraine — was less critical of the specific aspects of the electioneering currently occurring in the country. He underscored, however, that in a truly free and fair election everybody must have the ability to express an opinion and access the political process.

At the other end of the spectrum of critique, Canada's Secretary of State for Central and Eastern Europe Gar Knutson said on February 18 after meeting with

Ukraine's Minister of Foreign Affairs Anatolii Zlenko in Kyiv that he saw no problems thus far in the Ukrainian elections.

"We were following the elections with interest. There are no particular alarm bells going ... right now," explained Mr. Knutson, according to RFE/FL Report.

The visits by the three Western diplomats came less than two weeks after a stop in Kyiv by another U.S. diplomat, current Undersecretary of State Paula Dobriansky. A political appointee of President George W. Bush who is a member of the Republican Party, Dr. Dobriansky had met also with state and government leaders to discuss the parliamentary elections and to call for transparency in the processes and an even playing field for all the candidates and political parties.

Dr. Albright's trip was followed within a day by the arrival of U.S. Reps. Marcy Kaptur and Bob Schaffer. Former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine Steven Pifer, currently U.S. assistant secretary of state, was scheduled to follow them into Kyiv on February 22.

Another delegation of legislators, this

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Congressional resolution focuses on Rada elections

WASHINGTON — Members of both the House of Representatives and the Senate have introduced identical resolutions "Urging the government of Ukraine to ensure a democratic, transparent and fair election process leading up to the March 31, 2002, parliamentary elections."

The House measure was introduced on January 29 by Reps. Louise Slaughter (D-N.Y.), Joseph M. Hoeftel (D-Pa.) and Christopher H. Smith (R-N.J.); on the Senate side the resolution was introduced on February 7 by Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-Colo.), Sen. Christopher J. Dodd (D-Conn.) and Sen. Sam Brownback (R-Kansas).

House Resolution 339 now has 27 co-sponsors; it was referred to the Committee on International Relations. Senate Resolution 205 was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.) has joined as an additional co-sponsor.

The resolution urges the government of Ukraine "to enforce impartially the new election law, including provisions calling for: (A) the transparency of election procedures; (B) access for international election observers; (C) multi-party representation on election commissions;

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